

ings, but only at the cost of continued payment for the servants themselves.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT IN UTAH

While the Native Americans and the Euro-American settlers struggled with one another over the resources of the valleys along the Wasatch and Plateau Fronts and over the meaning of acceptable trade along the Old Spanish Trail, the Mormons faced a much more serious threat to their independence from the American society from which they had fled.

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Gadsden Purchase in 1852 ceded all the territory to the United States that was south of the forty-second parallel, down to the present northern boundary of Mexico. Since the territory America conquered included all of Utah, the federal government had the problem of organizing a government for the region.

In the absence of rule by the Mexican or American governments, the Mormon settlers simply administered the region through a customary system, choosing local stake presidents, high counselors, and bishops to govern. During the spring of 1849, the leaders in Utah—probably members of the Council of Fifty—decided to apply for territorial status, the usual path to eventual statehood. On May 4, 1849, the Council sent John M. Bernhisel, a physician noted more for his political skills than medical skills, to lobby for territorial status.

Then the Mormon leaders began to have second thoughts. On July 1, 1849, Almon W. Babbitt, an attorney and businessman who had been lobbying in the East for the interests of the Mormon people, returned to Salt Lake City. Babbitt seems to have understood the bitter conflict that territorial government could easily bring, since outside political appointees—friends of the administration in power—generally got the juicy executive and judicial offices.

Once the Mormon leadership understood the potential for friction promised by territorial government, they agreed to draft a constitution and apply for admission as a state. Then, following a pattern tried in at least four other



Thomas L. Kane (1822-1883) was a Pennsylvania aristocrat who negotiated a settlement of the Utah War.

cases by Tennessee (the state of Franklin), Oregon (under the Champoeg Constitution), California, and Texas, the people of Utah organized the State of Deseret, which they named after a Book of Mormon word meaning *honeybee*, and applied for admission into the Union. Like the people of Tennessee and Oregon, the Utahns failed because Congress refused to admit them as states.

Nevertheless, in informal meetings probably held between July 1 and 18, 1849, members of the Council of Fifty drafted a constitution for the State of Deseret. After writing a memorial to Congress and backdating the convention to a more convenient March 5 to 10, the Council sent Babbitt east to lobby for statehood. To notify others of Babbitt's mission, they sent letters to Wilford Woodruff, then president of the church's mission in the East; Thomas L. Kane, well connected in Washington; and Bernhisel.

In late November, Bernhisel and Woodruff visited with Kane in Philadelphia. Already informed of the First Presidency's decision, Kane urged Bernhisel to abandon the territorial